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COMBAT LEADERSHIP: TO FLY OR NOT TO FLY?

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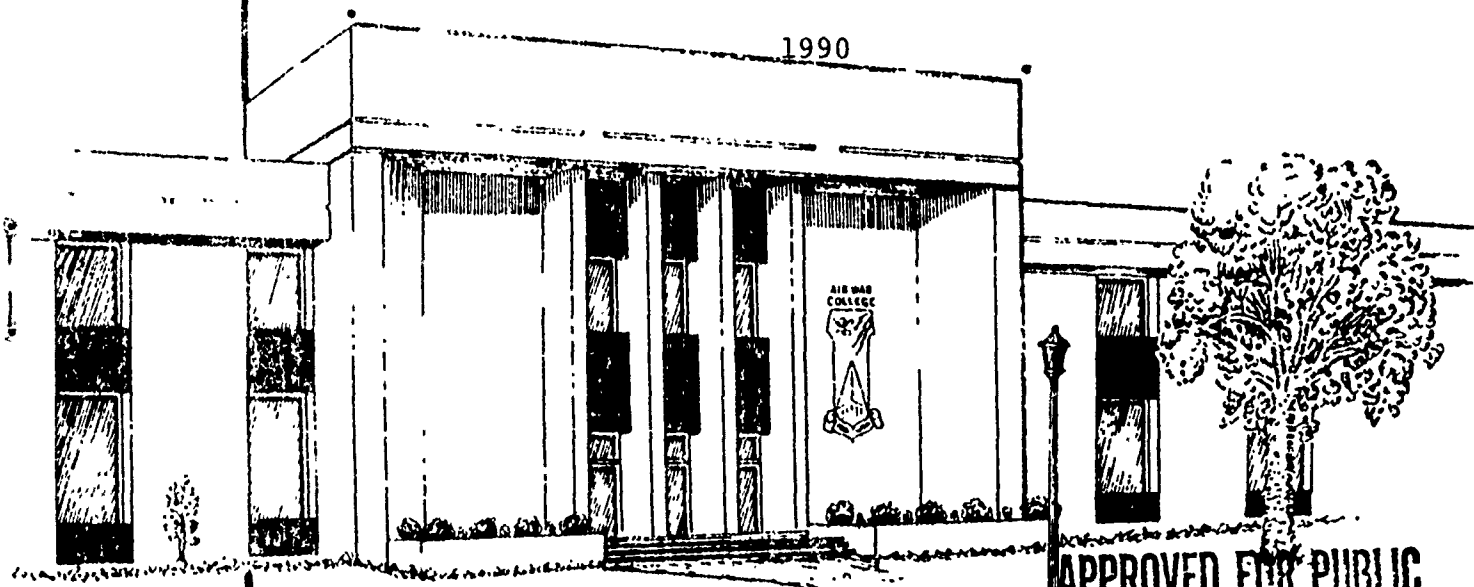
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A DEFENSE ANALYTICAL STUDY SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN
FULFILLMENT OF THE CURRICULUM
REQUIREMENT

Advisor: Colonel Douglas B. Cairns

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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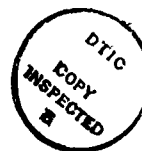
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TITLE: Combat Leadership: To Fly Or Not To Fly?

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Senior rated officers in command billets face many mutually exclusive obligations on a daily basis. The most complex dichotomy may be that of their roles as an air leader, leading their combat forces into battle, and as a unit commander, responsible for the leadership of a large, complex organization preparing for or fighting a war. This study will analyze the tension from these competing demands on wing commanders and their senior staff members and define what should be considered their role in modern air combat.

Looking at it from a neutral position, there appears to be, at least in this study, more arguments against than for senior leaders flying in combat. However, this does not imply that senior leaders should NOT fly in combat, THEY WILL. It does, however, lead to the requirement for an analytical and objective, unbiased decision process. Our recommendations should help senior leadership in determining whether senior commanders should fly in future combat and at what command level the transition from flyer to air campaign leader occurs.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Lt Col Franklin G. Baehre Jr. (MBA, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute) was commissioned through ROTC in 1970. A graduate of Undergraduate Pilot Training, Lt Col Baehre has served assignments in AC-119, B-52 and FB-111 aircraft. He has performed duties as an Instructor Pilot in the FB-111 Combat Crew Training Squadron at Plattsburgh AFB, New York. He attended Air Command and Staff College and has served a tour as an Acquisition Management Officer at Wright-Patterson AFB from 1983 to 1986. LtCol Baehre has also served as an FB-111 Squadron Operations Officer at Plattsburgh (1986-1989). He is currently a member of the Air War College Class of 1990.

Lt Col Bradford S. Crandall (MSSM, University of Southern California) was commissioned through Officers Training School in 1970 and attended Undergraduate Navigator Training. He attended F-4 Combat Crew Training at Luke AFB, AZ and has flown as an F-4 Instructor Weapon Systems Officer at Seymour Johnson AFB, Ubon RTAFB, Udorn RTAFB, Clark AB, and Hill AFB. Lt Col Crandall was assigned to Langley AFB, VA as an Air Defense Plans Staff Officer and Chief of Support Plans, HQ ADTAC. Returning to flying in 1985, he was assigned to George AFB, CA as Assistant Operations Officer, 21TFTS and then as Commander of Detachment 3, 4444 Operations Squadron(OTD)(TAC). Lt Col Crandall is a member of the Air War College Class of 1990.

Lt Col James M. Deaver (MA, Ball State University) received his commission from ROTC in 1967 and attended Undergraduate Navigator Training. He has served tours as an F-4 Weapon Systems Officer at Homestead AFB, Udorn RTAFB, Camp New Amsterdam and Moody AFB. He separated from active duty in 1978 and joined the 482TFW, Air Force Reserve, at Homestead AFB, FL. In 1981, Lt Col Deaver moved to the 924 TFG (AFRES) at Bergstrom AFB, TX where he served as Scheduler, Assistant Chief of Standardization and Evaluation, Assistant Operations Officer, and Training Officer. Lt Col Deaver is a member of the Air War College Class of 1990.

Lt Col William A. McLoughlin (MA, Ball State University) was commissioned through Officers Training School in 1969 and attended Undergraduate Pilot Training at Vance AFB, OK. He was assigned to the 305 Air Refueling Squadron (AREFS), Grissom AFB, IN as a KC-135 copilot. Lt Col McLoughlin, over the next eight years, progressed through the normal flying positions within the squadron and wing and left the active component in 1979. He joined the 72 AREFS, Air Force Reserve at Grissom upon separation from the active force and pursued a civilian career in the investment banking industry. Prior to being selected to attend the Air War College Class of 1990, Lt Col McLoughlin was the Commander of the 72 AREFS.

Lt Col William D. Orcutt (MPA, Golden Gate University) graduated from the Air Force Academy in 1973. He attended Undergraduate Navigator Training and has been assigned as a RF-4C Weapon Systems Officer at Shaw AFB and Kadena AB, Japan and a Tactical Navigation Instructor for Air Training Command. Lt Col Orcutt was selected for the SR-71 program in 1982 and has flown over 80 operational SR-71 missions as a Reconnaissance Systems Officer. He became the Operations Officer and Commander of the USAF's only SR-71 squadron. Prior to coming to the Air War College where he is a student in the Class of 1990, Lt Col Orcutt was the Assistant Deputy Commander for Operations for the 9th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing.

Lt Col Freneau B. Surguine III (BS, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical Institute) was commissioned through Officer Training School in 1969. He attended Undergraduate Pilot Training and was assigned to fly C-130 aircraft at Clark AB, RP and KC-135s at Minot AFB, ND. He separated from active duty in 1977 and flew B-707s in Indonesia. Lt Col Surguine returned to active duty in 1979 as an RC-135 copilot. He has also been assigned to HQ AFMPC as a Resource Manager in the Colonels Group. His most recent assignments have been as a KC-135 Flight Commander, Instructor Pilot, and Operations Officer at Fairchild AFB, WA and Squadron Commander, Dyess AFB, TX. Lt Col Surguine was the Deputy Commander of the 96th Combat Support Group when he was selected for Air War College where he is in the Class of 1990.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Senior rated officers in command billets face many mutually exclusive obligations on a daily basis. The most complex dichotomy may be that of their roles as an air leader, leading their combat forces into battle, and as a unit commander, responsible for the leadership of a complex organization preparing for or fighting a war. This study will analyze the tension from these competing demands on wing commanders and their senior staff members and define what should be considered the role of commanders and senior staff officers in modern air combat.

It is impossible to enumerate all the characteristics of a leader or to anticipate all the circumstances in which a leader must influence the actions of others. (12:xiv) However, this study will review the factors that have been pivotal to the commander's decisions on what his role and the role of his senior staff should be in combat flying. Then, we will cite the results of our research into current attitudes of senior Air Force, sister service, and international officers, who have been wing commanders, on these factors. Finally, we will draw conclusions and make recommendations for the senior flying commander's role in future air combat operations.

CHAPTER 11

FACTORS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM

Command of a flying wing or a senior leadership position in one is the ultimate career aspiration of most rated officers. If one attains such a position in times of conflict or times where combat is a real possibility, the role of that senior officer can be a key to success or failure of that wing in fulfilling its wartime mission. But where does the senior officer fit into the combat flying schedule while he is also responsible for the daily prosecution of not only the operations effort but also the total functioning of the wing?

In our analysis of this problem, we looked at several factors that commanders and senior officers have considered throughout history in arriving at that difficult decision.

Selection Process

First and foremost, the unit commander is the individual most critical to the leadership of the wing. The selection process leading to command is the most important of all assignment actions.

There can be little doubt that the unit command position is one of the positions for which the selection of the right man is of critical importance to the effectiveness of the Air Force. Since few basically important actions anywhere in the Air Force escapes his final touch, and his final touch is considered the most important, a strong case could

be made...unit command is the most critical of all positions. (3:37)

The importance of the commander to the unit seems intuitively obvious, but this leads to a curious situation. If the commander is of prime importance, how can he best fulfill his leadership function? The obvious answer is by leading. But how? This question led to our second factor. Should commanders fly in combat at all? General Ira Eaker summed up traditional leadership needs and methods in 1942 when he wrote:

No leader should ever send airman^e to battle unless he knows by personal experience their problems and the limitations of their equipment and the opposition they will meet. Great leaders in the air and on the ground do not send men. They lead them. (11:144)

Eaker followed through with his belief that the commander's exercise of leadership must include combat flying in directives to his subordinate units.

It is my desire that members of the Eighth Bomber Command Staff do sufficient operational missions in order to be cognizant of the problems facing combat crews and sympathetic with their effort. (11:145)

He then followed through by his own actions, flying on multiple missions including the first B-17 raid in Europe on 17 August 1942 against the Sotteville rail yard at Rouen (11:174), the first FRANTIC shuttle raid from Italy to the Soviet Union on 2 June 1944 (11:398), even returning to Italy to fly a P-51 over the DRAGOON beachhead on 15 August 1944. (11:418)

The practice of senior commanders flying in combat was observed by many others as well. Well-known examples abound in

World War II, including General Curtis LeMay who instituted the "Combat Box" and salvo bombing in his group and led missions against Regensburg/Schweinfurt.(11:235) More recent conflicts provide additional examples. Colonel Robin Olds, Wing Commander of the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing, downed four MIGs in Southeast Asian air combat and Colonel Carl Miller, commander of the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing led the May 1972 strike which succeeded in destroying the strategic Paul Doumer Bridge in Hanoi, North Vietnam during Operation Linebacker I.(9:14)

Security Considerations

Historical examples have set the precedent for senior leaders to fly combat. There has not been any doubt over that fact. But could there be circumstances where a wing commander should not participate in all or some of the combat missions flown by his unit? The next factor we explored was the impact of the loss of the wing commander to the unit, along with his specialized knowledge -- especially classified or sensitive knowledge. Could or should the possession of certain classified information have a bearing on senior officers flying combat missions?

Our historical research led to some specifics of considering using knowledge of classified information to evaluate the combat flying requirement. Perhaps the best known example was that of General Spaatz who did not fly combat because of his knowledge about ULTRA.

During the war Eaker went on five missions, Spaatz none. A major reason Spaatz did not - in fact could not - go on combat missions was his having been briefed on ULTRA, the remarkable British achievement in breaking the top German code. Anyone let in on ULTRA could not risk being captured. Eaker refused an ULTRA briefing, saying he would rely on his intelligence officer to keep him posted on what ULTRA divulged but not how it was learned. He felt much more strongly than Spaatz about the importance of participating in the air battles. (11:145)

In addition to the potential loss of critical classified information if a senior leader is lost or captured, another factor to be considered in the decision making process is the potential leadership gap at the wing.

Loss Of Leadership

Again, we reviewed historical data to see the effects of loss of senior leadership, both from a unit morale viewpoint and the leadership vacuum such losses could create. Loss of leadership can be doubly detrimental, as World War II German ace Adolf Galland commented:

The more the standard of new pilots sank, the more important it became for our units to be led by able and experienced officers. But, naturally, there was greater shortage of these than ever. Good officers are the product of careful selection and training. But, the treasure of experience can only be built up by operational combat, and this process unfortunately causes a reduction of their numbers. (6:255)

The allied side also suffered similar losses in leadership. General Frank M. Andrews, known as "the best pilot in army air," (11:238) was killed flying a combat support mission. He was remembered by Ira Eaker as follows:

He was always marked as one of the future leaders of Army Air. I always felt certain that he would have been picked by Marshall to command our forces in the invasion...I don't know of anybody that I had a closer friendship with and a greater admiration for than Frank Andrews. (11:254)

The examples of Adolf Galland and Frank Andrews both occurred in the protracted conflict experience of World War II. Our research into more recent short-duration uses of airpower was less conclusive. We were unable to document the rank and positions of flying commanders during the more recent conflicts which included the Mayaguez rescue mission, the Iranian hostage rescue mission, the Grenada Invasion, or the El Dorado Canyon attack on Libya. However, personal knowledge of our group led to the observation that senior commanders did not participate in actual flight operations during these onetime, short duration, aerial actions.

The obvious loss to a unit of an experienced and talented leader must be a concern of senior leadership, but implementing ways of backfilling combat losses can ameliorate the impact. One obvious means of minimizing the impact is by training and nurturing subordinates who would fill the shoes of the leader until a formal replacement is identified. As a former wing commander stated in Excellence in Tactical Fighter Squadrons:

One of our greatest responsibilities is to teach those who are behind us so that when we turn the reins of leadership over to those individuals, they are prepared, and understand the philosophies and techniques that we've already found to be successful. The ability and initiative are there, it has to be brought out and exercised. (4:28)

Commander's Contribution

Our attention then shifted from the impact of the commander's loss in combat to the commander's contribution to the war effort. If we proceed from the starting point of a senior leader/commander participating in combat, how can he be best prepared? Specifically, we investigated what training and practice investments were needed to make a senior air leader ready to lead his forces into combat. A former Israeli commander with eight kills wrote:

Man's excellence in the air is best measured from three dimensions: flying proficiency; general airmanship; and personality characteristics...The most important dimension of a good fighter pilot is his flying proficiency - the ability to fly an aircraft to its maneuvering limitations...A proficient pilot has a better chance to destroy an enemy aircraft. Flying proficiency leads to increased self-confidence which is a very important element in successful aerial combat. (7:7,8)

Textbook materials in the United States Air Force stress the need for proficient leaders.

A flight lead that is not current and proficient in basic flying skills cannot and will not devote adequate attention to the safe and effective conduct of the flight...A proficient and effective flight lead is able to fly heads up, maneuver his own aircraft instinctively, monitor the environment and performance of his wingman, and control the flight's execution. He is able to recognize and react to contingencies quickly and properly. (1:3)

Perhaps true proficiency is the commander's greatest challenge to achieve and maintain. Certainly, command responsibilities inherent in keeping large organizations running well create great drains on the leader's ability to stay truly proficient in his assigned aircraft. However, the

leader's proficiency is a key factor in his decision to participate in or lead others into combat.

Technical Proficiency

Historical evidence on the difficulty senior leaders have in maintaining an adequate proficiency level to be a credible leader was summed up in the biography of General Daniel "Chappie" James, Jr. At the time of the excerpt below, General James was the Vice Commander of the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing at Ubon Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand, under the command of Robin Olds.

Chappie worked tirelessly and enthusiastically to make Ubon a good place for fliers to live and work and to perform the administrative function of the wing, thereby releasing Olds for combat operations...Yet his desk jobs since Bentwaters had deprived him of flying time and he was short in current tactical skills...His predecessor as Vice Wing Commander felt obligated to fly the F-4 in Vietnam with an instructor pilot in the back seat because he recognized that he could not, with his desk assignments, maintain his proficiency. 'How can you be a leader out here and command respect without flying with them?' (8:87-89)

The importance of technical credibility for a leader came back time and time again throughout our historical research as we were isolating factors bearing on the problem. In addition to a proficient leader being a credible leader, proficiency also serves another purpose. It keeps senior leaders abreast of the latest doctrinal and technological trends, the next area we chose to study. Air Vice Marshall Walker of the Royal Air Force observed:

It is very easy - in a force as dominated by fast moving technology - to become outdated; and we seem to have arranged our peacetime affairs in such a manner that the time it takes to keep fully abreast of developments in technology is not always readily available to our senior officers. Yet if time is not made available, there is risk of a technological gulf...There is no better way of bridging that gulf than for senior officers to fly regularly with their squadrons...' Senior officers should fly high performance aircraft because it is good for promotion, and the survivors are worth having.' (14:373)

Summary

These were the factors we close for our analysis and around which we built the survey for past and present wing commanders. The following chapters will summarize the results of the survey and provide insights into current attitudes and beliefs about senior officer flying.

CHAPTER III

STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND

The Strategic Air Command has been characterized by the heavy bomber, especially during World War II, where strategic bombardment came of age -- as witnessed by the deep air strikes into Nazi Germany and culminating with the nuclear bombardment against Japan, bringing about an end to the war and thrusting the world into the nuclear age.

In the post World War II Air Force, Strategic Air Command bomber aircrews have been joined by tanker aircrews, for in-flight refueling, thus greatly extending the range of bomber aircraft. This has greatly increased their deterrent value in the nuclear age and therefore made them an extremely important instrument of national policy and power.

Strategic Air Command Characteristics

The makeup of the Strategic Air Command changed after World War II to incorporate tanker aircrews in addition to the bomber crews. Aircraft types assigned to the Strategic Air Command have been and continue to be multi-place; that is, requiring a minimum of one pilot and one navigator as well as the option to carry various other crewmembers such as electronic warfare officers, boom operators, and crew chiefs.

Provisions also exist for additional "observers" as well, depending on the particular model (B-1, B-52, or KC-135).

Over the last 25 to 30 years, the Strategic Air Command has also operated and flown specialized aircraft such as the U-2 and SR-71. Both of these aircraft are high-altitude, pressure-suit environment operated aircraft, flown by only one pilot, in the case of the U-2, and a pilot and a reconnaissance systems officer in the SR-71. A third bombing aircraft operated by the command is the FB-111, a two-place fighter-bomber, also operated by a crew of two - a pilot and a radar navigator.

These crew compositions are highlighted for several reasons. First, aerial maneuvering and tactics for a large (i.e. bomber or tanker) aircraft are significantly different than those of a maneuverable, fighter/fighter-bomber type aircraft. Additionally, the flight regime of the bomber aircraft, usually planned to avoid the environment of the enemy fighter threat, coupled with its large payload prevent "aerial combat maneuvering", as with fighter aircraft. Further, in the case of the large multi-place aircraft, observer positions exist for supervisory duty -- thereby allowing for either an additional crewmember or a supervisor, if so desired.

All these aircraft have been described to characterize the cockpit environment of Strategic Air Command aircraft, and offer an insight into the feasibility (or lack) of senior commanders flying these aircraft into combat with their crews.

Survey Results

The purpose of this section is to compile and summarize the results of the surveys returned by senior flying leaders throughout the Strategic Air Command. Of the ten surveys completed and returned, nine were accomplished by current wing commanders and one by an air division commander. All participants had combat experience with seven having flown various models of the B-52, two respondents the KC-135A, and one respondent had flight experience in the C-130. The survey results were as follows:

1. WHAT DO YOU PERCEIVE TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT ROLE OF A SENIOR FLYING COMMANDER AT THE WING LEVEL?

The answers to this question varied significantly from "being an effective communicator" to "insuring quality training for wing personnel." The common theme among all respondents was, however, the necessity to demonstrate strong leadership characteristics. The importance of personal integrity as a leadership trait was specifically stated or implied in several of the responses.

A second central theme that responses focused on was the importance that senior flying commanders placed upon insuring that mission goals be successfully achieved. As one wing commander surveyed put it, "as actual combat fades from view and the wall comes down, realism seems to disappear from training. Senior commanders have to keep the mission

perspective." Of great interest was the fact that no commander indicated that personally leading his aircrews during actual combat missions was a primary role and of great importance to wing effectiveness.

2. AS A FLYING COMMANDER, DO YOU THINK THAT THE "TOP FOUR" (CC,CV,DO,ADO) IN THE WING SHOULD FLY COMBAT MISSIONS?

The overall response to this question was fairly predictable with eight of the ten commanders favoring an active flying role during combat. The most frequent logic to their reasoning was that they would lose personal credibility and the respect of the crew force if they would not risk what was being asked of the other flyers. Most commanders favoring "Top Four" combat participation did however temper their reply based upon the complexity of the particular mission. One, for example, said it would be unrealistic if not impossible to fly an executed Emergency War Order (EWO) mission due to the response time and other primary wing responsibilities. But, again, the majority could be paraphrased by their belief that "Commanders must lead in combat."

The commanders that answered no to this question simply placed a higher priority upon their other responsibilities at the wing level responsibilities. Additionally, they were not convinced that senior flyers could maintain the technical proficiency required to successfully accomplish a complex or high threat mission given their current levels of training.

One respondent commented that his "flying skills are still sharp but the mission knowledge is eroding."

3. ARE THE POSITIVE AFFECTS OF THESE INDIVIDUALS FLYING IN COMBAT OUTWEIGHED BY THE POTENTIAL RISK TO NATIONAL SECURITY IF THEY SHOULD BE CAPTURED?

This question produced a unanimous response in the negative. No one believed that national security would be significantly compromised should a senior leader, especially at wing level, be captured and interrogated by the enemy. Of great interest was the common belief among commanders that their knowledge of matters that would be harmful to the nation, if divulged to an adversary, was only slightly greater than that of the average Emergency War Order certified officer crew member. As summed up by a survey respondent, "it is the rare wing commander who holds so much information as to seriously jeopardize national security if captured."

4. IF YOU WERE NOT AVAILABLE FOR DUTY, WOULD THERE BE A LEADERSHIP GAP IN THE WING?

"Hell no, I should be fired if I let this happen!" wrote one wing commander. This statement clearly points out that the respondents feel that one of the most important tasks of a commander is to adequately train his potential replacement. The vast majority of respondents to this question strongly believed that, in their absence, the wing/division would

function well. There would be little, if any, degradation in combat effectiveness. One individual commented that there may be a short term void in leadership while a replacement is learning the job because in "running such a large operation only the commander has strings on most of what is going on."

5. CAN THESE SENIOR LEADERS AFFORD THE TIME REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE AND MAINTAIN A FULLY COMBAT READY STATUS?

Virtually all the Strategic Air Command commanders surveyed were maintaining some level of dual aircraft qualification. Perhaps if they selected one or the other weapons system to maintain single aircraft currency, their answer to this question would have been different. All but one respondent felt it was almost impossible to accomplish all the in-flight and ground training requirements to achieve a fully combat ready status. The consensus opinion can be best summarized by the comment that "Our peace time Air Force diverts our attention to other areas. We still fly and do it well, but for combat purposes our skills are too low."

6. IS THERE A CREDIBILITY GAP CREATED BY SENIOR LEADERS NOT FLYING IN COMBAT?

A substantial majority of responding commanders believed strongly that a good commander, at any level, leads by example. If you are not willing to fly in combat, there would be a significant problem created by the resulting lack of

credibility among unit aircrews. "People will more readily put their ass on the line when the commander puts his there" was the comment emphasized on one questionnaire.

On the other side of the coin, one commander was of the opinion that the crew force was well aware of the training resource limitations and did not expect the senior leaders to be fully combat ready. Specifically, he commented that "I'm too slow and dangerous, and they know it." Adding, "It's time you get off this childish idea of combat and faced realities of professionalism."

7. DO YOUR CURRENT DUTIES ALLOW YOU AN ADEQUATE LEVEL OF FLYING PROFICIENCY TO BE TRULY COMBAT READY AT THE START OF A CONFLICT? HOW ABOUT LEADING A FLIGHT OR COMPOSITE FORCE VICE FLYING AS A WINGMAN?

Interestingly, in view of the majority of answers to the previous question, eight respondents indicated that their administrative responsibilities did not allow them to achieve combat ready proficiency. Central to this theme was the opinion that senior leaders still have the physical and mental capacity for a high degree of basic flying proficiency if only adequate time to hone their mission flying skills were available. "Lack of systems knowledge and of flying a degraded aircraft are large detractors" to combat readiness was an observation made by one of the commanders. The two senior flyers that answered no to this question did not indicate a

reason for their response. However, elsewhere on their surveys they implied that command responsibilities and maintaining combat flying proficiency were not compatible objectives.

8. HOW WOULD EXPOSURE TO RISK OF LOSS OR TYPE/LEVEL OF CONFLICT INFLUENCE YOUR DECISION TO FLY IN COMBAT?

The respondents were in complete agreement that the potential for loss of their own life was not a factor which would impact their decision to fly in combat. However, one very insightful remark was, "The risk to me would not be a player, but the risk to my guys that might result from my inadequate preparation would be a real consideration. The overriding decision would hinge on whether my flying would enhance or degrade the probability of mission success."

9. AT WHAT ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL DO YOU FEEL THAT THE COMMANDER'S WORK LOAD BECOMES TOO GREAT TO EFFECTIVELY LEAD OR FLY HIGH THREAT MISSIONS?

Six of the ten commanders surveyed believed that at the Wing level and above, senior fliers should not attempt to participate in a high threat combat mission. No specific reasons were given for this response. However, we can hypothesize that the perceived lack of flying proficiency at this level is a significant factor in their decision process. One commander responded that the organizational level affecting decisions to fly in combat:

...depends on the number and diversity of aircraft in the wing; whether you are a tenant or host wing; etc. In a small wing such as the KC-10 wing at Seymour-Johnson where the wing is a tenant and only has 20 aircraft, the wing commander should be able to remain proficient enough. In a large wing, such as Barksdale, with 31 B-52s (half conventional and half ALCM), 19 KC-10s, and 16 KC-135s, the DO can't maintain proficiency. The squadron is probably the level where all commanders should be able to effectively lead or fly a high threat combat mission.

10. WHAT OTHER INSIGHTS COULD YOU SHARE ABOUT SENIOR OFFICERS FLYING IN COMBAT?

Several excellent comments relating to the importance of experience, physical condition, age, and flying "smarts" were forwarded as factors to be considered when faced with the decision of combat flying. A couple of observations from wing commanders concerning the realities of senior leaders flying in combat worth including are:

- "Peacetime wing commanders, if they follow everything they are tasked to do, would be pure, non-flying administrators."

- Flying in combat is "entirely dependent on MAJCOM and type of aircraft/mission."

Summary

As the surveys indicate, all flying commanders desire to fly these missions with their aircrews. This is certainly no surprise. The practicality of senior officer participation, however, in combat, is another matter and of some debate. Is it more feasible for a senior commander to fly in combat in a

large multi-place aircraft than in either single or dual - place fighter? Clearly, this issue is a multifaceted one, charged with emotional opinion both for and against senior officer participation.

CHAPTER IV

TACTICAL AIR COMMAND

The history of tactical air forces is full of examples of senior flying commanders physically leading their forces into battle. The exploits and successes of commanders such as Claire Chennault of the American Volunteer Group in China, Pete Quesada in the European Theater of Operations in World War II and Robin Olds, 8TFW Commander, in Vietnam are often cited to justify the requirement for senior flying commanders to fly. However, this is not the only requisite for an effective leader. The commander is responsible for the efficient and effective employment of a large and complex fighting machine in the form of a tactical fighter wing. The responsibilities encompassed are vast - ranging from logistics/maintenance problems to personnel policies and unit morale. The actual in-flight leadership is merely a small portion of the leadership required of a wing commander on a daily basis.

This chapter will deal with what are felt to be the most important influences on a senior flying commander's attitude toward combat flying and leadership in combat. The views derived from our survey will also be presented to compare and contrast the views of present and past commanders of tactical flying units.

Tactical Air Force Characteristics

Before anyone can analyze or evaluate the leadership styles or capabilities of senior flying commanders we must present several factors that are unique to tactical flying and fighter pilots. These factors play an important role in determining the senior flying commander's attitude since he lives with these attitudes and values every day of his professional life.

First, the fighter pilot by the nature of his profession and aircraft design normally performs his daily mission and fights alone or in very small groups of two to four people. This individualized combat arena requires fighter crewmembers to be extremely self reliant and very self-confident in his judgements and convictions. Second, the fighter crewmember is also extremely technically competent due to the nature of his work environment. The complexity of modern fighter aircraft and their associated weapons systems require this high level of technical competence to assure successful mission accomplishment. Third, the term "Fighter Pilot" is applied generically to all rated crew members who fly tactical fighter aircraft. There are a large number of rated navigators who fly as Weapon Systems and Electronic Warfare Officers who have earned the right to this sobriquet and they are included in the discussion as fighter pilots.

Survey Results

We had fifteen responses to our survey from tactical air force commanders. All fifteen had combat experience which included a variety of aircraft. Nine had combat experience in the F-4, two in the RF-4, one each in the F-105, F-100, A-37 and one who did not designate the type of aircraft. The survey results were as follows:

1. WHAT DO YOU PERCEIVE TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT ROLE OF A SENIOR FLYING COMMANDER AT THE WING LEVEL?

The survey results lacked one response of being unanimous for leadership being the most important role of a senior flying commander. The one response that did not cite leadership cited credibility as the most important role. Four other responses included credibility as a necessary ingredient for command. Included with leadership and credibility, the respondents believed a senior flying commander should supervise in a manner that would ensure clear and understandable mission objectives and promote effective team work through "leadership by example". Effective leadership should be exhibited throughout the organization to ensure overall mission accomplishment by the entire unit without overemphasizing the flying section of the unit operation.

2. AS A FLYING COMMANDER, DO YOU THINK THAT THE "TOP FOUR" (CC,CV,DO,ADO) IN THE WING SHOULD FLY COMBAT MISSIONS?

The responses were unanimous for the "Top Four" flying in combat. Ten of the responses cited credibility as the main reason the "Top Four" should actively fly in combat.

"Leadership by example" was the means cited to achieve this credibility. Additionally, it was felt that leadership by example would motivate their people, promote high morale and help create the cohesion needed in a successful combat unit. With the "Top Four" out front, they would personally experience the problems associated with combat and be able to implement any changes needed to improve unit operations. By flying in combat with their aircrews, the "Top Four" are thought to be better able to judge the strengths and weaknesses of their combat flyers more accurately. Moreover, the "Top Four" are usually the most experienced flyers and combat veterans in the wing.

3. ARE THE POSITIVE AFFECTS OF THESE INDIVIDUALS FLYING IN COMBAT OUTWEIGHED BY THE POTENTIAL RISK TO NATIONAL SECURITY IF THEY SHOULD BE CAPTURED?

Again, the responses were unanimous in their support for the positive affects of senior commanders flying in combat. The risk to national security was viewed evenly as an acceptable risk and as no risk at all, should the commander be captured. One response pointed out the value to his fellow

airman of a senior leader in a prisoner of war situation if he were shot down and captured. Again, many respondents believed that the senior leaders must exhibit commitment to the mission and demonstrate that commitment with leadership by example. Thus giving the commander a better understanding of the problems associated with combat flying.

4. IF YOU WERE NOT AVAILABLE FOR DUTY, WOULD THERE BE A LEADERSHIP GAP IN THE WING?

Nine of the individuals surveyed thought there would not be a gap in leadership in this situation. Seven of these commanders said their staff was sufficiently trained to fill in for them in case of their absence. The other two of the nine left the responsibility of command to the vice commander-that being his job in the commanders absence. Others suggested alternating flying days with the vice commander so that a senior flying officer would always be available. Four respondents thought there would be a gap in leadership, two said that this deficiency would occur only when operational requirements changed quickly and the vice commander was not thoroughly familiar with all unit contingency plans. The other two respondents thought there would be a gap only if the strengths of those officers filling in for the commander were lacking. The overall consensus was that in a combat situation the quality of the people and their training would ensure no lack of leadership due to the loss of the commander.

5. CAN THESE SENIOR LEADERS AFFORD THE TIME REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE AND MAINTAIN A FULLY COMBAT READY STATUS?

Thirteen of those surveyed believed the senior leader can and must afford the time required to maintain combat ready status. Six of the thirteen respondents stated emphatically that the senior leader must provide the time required to remain proficient in combat if he was to have any credibility. Two others stated that "combat requires the senior commander remain combat ready." Others believed that since the senior commander would normally be one of the most experienced flyers in the unit, he would not require as much flying time to maintain his combat ready status.

The two officers surveyed that thought the senior commander could not afford the time cited two different reasons. One said the commander would be putting too much emphasis on flying and not enough on the other functions of his unit. This had the potential of affecting the overall combat ready status of that unit. The other response cited the technological complexity of modern fighter aircraft which could preclude the senior commander from staying proficient, at least to the degree required in modern combat. This experience and previous combat time would not be sufficient strengths to overcome the lack of flying time in modern fighters. Conversations with current F-15 and F-16 pilots revealed a consensus of opinion that in order to remain proficient in modern fighter aircraft a minimum of fifteen flight hours per

month is necessary. This would entail the commander flying approximately three sorties per week in order to maintain a minimum proficiency level. Commanders could not afford this time every month nor could the unit afford the flight time, sorties, or personnel to keep the commander and other senior officers proficient.

Again, the vast majority of the officers surveyed believed that the senior commander must do what is required to remain proficient in combat and should set the example by leading his men into combat.

6. IS THERE A CREDIBILITY GAP CREATED BY SENIOR LEADERS NOT FLYING IN COMBAT?

Thirteen of the survey participants said that there would be a credibility gap created if their senior leaders did not fly in combat. The reasons given were some of the same already mentioned. Air Force leadership is by example and leading by example creates credibility with your people. Many respondents felt that the younger aircrews wanted the experience of their senior leaders out front so they could benefit and learn from that experience.

Some respondents felt that the younger aircrews would question the worth of the mission if the senior commanders did not support the mission with their participation. Others believed that the senior leadership must be in touch with the everyday problems of flying in combat in order to know their

unit and assess the overall quality of the unit. Additionally, in the personality intensive business of tactical aviation, expertise is important to credibility and credibility can only be validated by personal performance.

The remaining two participants said there would not necessarily be a credibility gap if senior leaders did not fly in combat. Their reasons were because some leaders lead from outside the cockpit and the younger aircrews would understand this and accept that senior leaders flying in combat would be the exception and not the rule. Again, the majority of the survey participants believed it was very important for senior leaders to fly in combat.

7. DO YOUR CURRENT DUTIES ALLOW YOU AN ADEQUATE LEVEL OF FLYING PROFICIENCY TO BE TRULY COMBAT READY AT THE START OF A CONFLICT? HOW ABOUT LEADING A FLIGHT OR COMPOSITE FORCE VICE FLYING AS A WINGMAN?

Three of the participants were not currently in flying positions and did not respond further. Four said that their duties did not allow flying proficiency. These respondents were an Air Force Reserve individual mobilization augmentee brigadier general, a brigadier general numbered air force commander, a member of the Air War College faculty, and the last did not elaborate as to why he was not proficient.

Seven of the other eight participants said their current duties did allow an adequate level of flying proficiency.

However, they felt that they would require several additional sorties before they would feel sufficiently proficient to lead flights in combat. The other believed that his previous fighter experience and proficiency would enable him to lead his men into combat without any additional sorties. In his opinion "leadership only requires the discipline to prepare."

8. HOW WOULD EXPOSURE TO RISK OR TYPE/LEVEL OF CONFLICT INFLUENCE YOUR DECISION TO FLY IN COMBAT?

Thirteen of the survey participants felt neither exposure to loss nor type/level of conflict would influence the tactical commander's decision to fly in combat. In general, the participants believed a tactical commander should fly and lead as often as possible in order to share the dangers of the mission, thereby creating credibility and exhibiting leadership by example to his aircrews. The other two participants said that the level of risk and type of conflict would influence their decision to fly in combat little, if at all. The only time it would influence their decision would be when the mission required a special mission capability that they did not personally possess or when it would jeopardize the mission or give advantage to the enemy.

As often stated in response to the above questions, the majority of the senior leaders surveyed believed the requirements to fly and lead in combat far out weighed the risk and problems associated with flying combat missions.

9. AT WHAT ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL DO YOU FEEL THAT THE COMMANDER'S WORK LOAD BECOMES TOO GREAT TO EFFECTIVELY LEAD OR FLY A HIGH THREAT COMBAT MISSION?

Nine of the participants thought senior commanders above the wing level should not fly in combat. Two participants felt that general officers should not fly in combat. Another three said that the wing and vice wing commanders should not fly in combat and one participant did not respond to the question. The reasons given were that the majority of commanders above the wing level would not be focused on a single mission, especially in a multi-aircraft wing, due to the competing unit requirements. Also, the majority felt those above wing level were not a part of the perceived leadership of the unit.

In the case of general officers, it was felt the combination of their position and their age should preclude them from flying in combat. There were few reasons given to the responses on this question, possibly because we did not ask for reasons to justify their response.

10. WHAT OTHER INSIGHTS COULD YOU SHARE ABOUT SENIOR OFFICERS FLYING IN COMBAT?

Six of the participants did not offer any further insights into senior officers flying in combat. Some of the insights offered have been covered in the other questions and may be repeated. Many participants felt some ideas were important enough to be repeated. The vast majority of the participants

felt senior flying commanders must be out front, visible in the leadership role, in order to cultivate credibility within their unit. They must be proficient, well prepared, ready, and capable of performing as the leader in the majority of unit combat missions. Senior commanders in combat are leaders of people, not managers of people. Although in combat, combat leadership should be paramount in the minds of the senior leaders, the senior leader must not ignore leadership in all the other areas of his unit. In the words of one of the participants, " I flew with Robin Olds and Chappie James in Southeast Asia, two leaders who led from the front. This created and sustained great unit morale, even with heavy losses".

Summary

Wing commanders in the Tactical Air Command units surveyed were strident in their feelings that senior officers should fly in combat for many reasons. The main reason for this feeling may be the thought that leadership is not synonymous with authority.(13:152) In order for a wing commander to be a leader and to exercise his authority in a positive manner he must be capable of proving his abilities to the aircrews in his unit.

Respondents felt that leadership by example, credibility, integrity and self discipline were factors that came to the forefront in leaders flying in combat. These are some of the

more important factors that were expressed by many of the commanders that were surveyed. They also stressed that a good leader and commander is also a good teacher - insuring his successor and his staff are capable of performing well even in the commander's absence.

As expected, due to the nature of tactical fighter operations and the personality of fighter pilots, the overwhelming position and support was for the commander to be out front - leading by example, in all but a few areas of a unit's combat taskings. The technological complexity of modern aircraft and weapons combined with the growing difficulties of commanding large complex organizations make this a goal that is increasingly difficult to achieve with any success. Although the commander and his senior staff strongly desire to lead by example, the difficulties mentioned make it a full time task to do either of these tasks let alone both simultaneously. In this light it is vital for the commander to use his judgement and experience to determine which role would best be maintained in order to provide the best leadership for his unit.

CHAPTER V

SISTER SERVICE AND OTHER NATIONS

A review of the practices and philosophies of our sister services and those of allied nations should serve to round out our research into this difficult area of whether or not a senior commander should actually be leading his men into combat. Theories of leadership vary greatly between our individual military services and those of our allies and this is where the greatest difficulty lies in determining the senior commander's role. Many of the international officers interviewed at the Air War College had actually participated in combat flying, primarily in junior ranks. However, there was some combat experience at the mid to senior levels of authority on the part of two respondents.

Force Characteristics

There are several factors which differentiate this sample group from those considered in Chapters 3 and 4. First, the majority of international officers considered come from countries whose air forces are numerically smaller than the U.S. Air Force. This in itself requires that they regard senior officers as being a vital and rare commodity. It is not a wise or efficient policy to allow your senior leadership to

lead the force into the fray on the opening day of a conflict. The accuracy of modern weapons is such that in the first two days of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Israeli Air Force lost ninety aircraft to surface-to-air missiles.(5:188) This ever increasing threat level makes the probability of high aircrew loss rates, even in a "small" war of short duration, practically a certainty.

There is also another consideration which is strongly aligned with force size. In these countries, the senior officer levels which were considered in the survey are often responsible for not only the flying organization but for the entire spectrum of base and higher headquarters coordination for those combat forces. There is a strong psychological desire for these personnel to desire to lead their troops into combat, the warrior image. However, in many cases these senior leaders are in positions that make them too important to risk on a mission, which by their philosophies, should be the responsibility of the squadron commander. This same concept is applicable to our sister services in the manner in which they apply their senior officers in support of the combat missions assigned to their forces.

Survey Results

This section summarizes the survey results from sister service and international officers assigned to the Air War College. Sixteen surveys were completed and returned to the

group for analysis. Of these sixteen participants, six officers had combat flying experience in a variety of aircraft including two officers in the MIG-21 and one each in F-86, F-100, Hawker Hunter and one had flown the Bell AB-205 Iroquois helicopter in combat.

The results will be keyed to the critical questions contained in the survey:

1. WHAT DO YOU PERCEIVE TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT ROLE OF A SENIOR FLYING COMMANDER AT THE WING LEVEL?

The majority of respondents stressed that leadership was the most important role of the senior commander. The basic theme of the answers was: unit leadership in pursuit of mission objectives. No respondent singled out leading their wing into combat as an important role, although many stressed preparing the organization through training, coordinating, and supervising of all wing/base functions.

One survey pointed to establishing and maintaining unit standards as a prime function, while another pointed to conducting all base activities. Most observed that there was a need for senior flying commanders to be respected aviators who could understand the demands placed on combat flyers.

2. AS A FLYING COMMANDER, DO YOU THINK THAT THE "TOP FOUR" (CC,CV,DO,ADO) IN THE WING SHOULD FLY COMBAT MISSIONS?

The surveys were split evenly with half saying that the

"Top Four" should fly combat missions and half saying that they should not. Reasons given for the "Yes" responses included leadership by example, keeping in touch with reality, and being able to provide immediate feedback on mission shortfalls. The single strongest theme was that of up-front leadership.

The even split with the negative opinion was frankly, surprising. We had anticipated a preponderance of affirmative responses, so we looked closely at the rationales that respondents cited for not actively participating in aerial; combat operations. Several themes emerged. The most prevalent theme was that squadron commanders and below were the most capable and qualified to execute the missions and that the risks of losing the commander did not outweigh the benefits gained by his flying. Respondents mentioned that the commander needed to be formulating the overall wing effort. One participant from a sister service observed that above the lieutenant colonel or O-5 level, flyers become too conservative and even their presence in a flight can inhibit mission planning, tactics and initiative on a mission.

3. ARE THE POSITIVE AFFECTS OF THESE INDIVIDUALS FLYING IN COMBAT OUTWEIGHED BY THE POTENTIAL RISK TO NATIONAL SECURITY IF THEY SHOULD BE CAPTURED?

The response to this question was evenly split as in Question #2 above. Those who favored combat flying by senior leaders pointed out that modern technology could now achieve

intelligence breakthroughs where interrogation was the only method available a few years ago. Another respondent made the observation that senior leaders, if captured, could have an adverse affect on enemy morale if enemy leaders were staying on the ground. A sister service observed that O-4s often have more useful intelligence of a technical nature than do their senior commanders! Negative comments centered around the potential adverse affects on friendly morale if experienced, senior leaders were lost while flying combat missions. Other comments included observations on the need for a team effort where the senior commander's role was leadership on and from the ground.

4. IF YOU WERE NOT AVAILABLE FOR DUTY, WOULD THERE BE A LEADERSHIP GAP IN THE WING?

The overwhelming majority of those surveyed indicated that one of the senior leader's prime tasks was to train his replacement and staff to insure continuity of effort if the commander was unavailable or lost in combat. Other respondents pointed out that the "Top Four" should not all fly on the same mission or at the same time, but should rotate flying of combat missions.

Perhaps one of the most significant comments was to the effect that the benefits of stability and continuity in senior leadership positions was not worth the cost of the unresponsiveness and misunderstandings which could arise within

an organization should the senior flying commanders not participate in combat missions along with the unit aircrews.

5. CAN THESE SENIOR LEADERS AFFORD THE TIME REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE AND MAINTAIN A FULLY COMBAT READY STATUS?

Demands on a senior leader's time was an area where most of those surveyed agreed. Most participants questioned the ability of senior leaders to meet all the regulatory requirements of peacetime "combat readiness" as defined by individual training manuals and national philosophies.

Although a minority maintained that they believed the greater experience level and background of senior flying commanders made them comfortable with their training level, the majority believed there were too many other demands on senior officers to allow a true combat readiness.

Negative opinions centered around two themes. First, the increased level of sophistication and technology in modern high-performance aircraft made it almost impossible to remain proficient in aircraft systems operation and tactics without a high level of daily flying. The second theme was that senior, older flyers still possessed the ego and fighting spirit of their junior officers, but could no longer maintain the needed levels of endurance, stamina and "G" tolerance to operate these sophisticated aircraft at sustained levels of maximum performance.

6. IS THERE A CREDIBILITY GAP CREATED BY SENIOR LEADERS NOT FLYING IN COMBAT

The majority of survey participants, ten out of sixteen, responded that there was no credibility gap created if senior leaders did not fly combat missions. Their rationale was based on senior leaders fulfilling their responsibilities to the total wing effort, while leaving combat flying to the squadron commanders.

Specific comments pointed out that leading by example does not necessarily include combat flying. It means setting the example in everyday peacetime flying, making the transition from being the proficient aircrew at lower levels of responsibility while realizing that senior commanders have many more complex responsibilities to carry out in support of the unit mission. Another theme in the responses to this question was that unit aircrews understood that they were the flyers and fighters and that the senior commanders were needed to keep the whole war effort going. One respondent asked the question in reverse and framed the question along the lines of "Would a poor commander who flew in combat be worth more than a good commander who did not?".

Respondents claiming there would be a credibility gap stressed leadership by example, including combat operations. Arguments included the fact that senior leaders make valuable contributions of their own experience to the less experienced crew force and the need for the senior commander to operate in

the aircrew's environment to better understand their needs and the dangers associated with flying combat missions. One response noted that senior leaders who are truly proficient and combat ready enhance unit morale while those who lack flying proficiency can seriously damage morale when they fly combat missions. The minority consensus pointed out that senior flyers did not have to be the best, but they did have to lead by example.

7. DO YOUR CURRENT DUTIES ALLOW YOU AN ADEQUATE LEVEL OF FLYING PROFICIENCY TO BE TRULY COMBAT READY AT THE START OF A CONFLICT? HOW ABOUT LEADING A FLIGHT OR COMPOSITE FORCE VICE FLYING AS A WINGMAN?

Only two of the sixteen surveys thought senior flyers would be sufficiently proficient at the start of a conflict to be truly combat ready. These same two respondents were also the only ones indicating that they would be comfortable starting out as flight or package leaders.

Negative responses were about evenly split between the two parts of the question. Although fourteen of sixteen respondents felt that their lack of proficiency made them less than fully combat ready at the start of a conflict, six believed they could fly as a wingman beside a proficient flight leader. One respondent indicated it was appropriate for junior officers to receive the benefit of the peacetime training hours needed for senior flyers to stay proficient, so that the junior

officers had the maximum possible experience at the start of a conflict.

8. HOW WOULD EXPOSURE TO RISK OF LOSS OR TYPE/LEVEL OF CONFLICT INFLUENCE YOUR DECISION TO FLY IN COMBAT?

Discounting the responses from six officers whose air forces do not allow wing commanders to fly, the overwhelming majority of participants indicated that the implied possibility of loss in combat would not influence their decision to fly those missions. Most respondents indicated they believed that the greater the risk involved, the more important it was for senior commanders to participate in combat flying.

No respondent commented on the influence that the type or level of conflict would have on their personal decision to fly in combat. One of those surveyed indicated that no one can predict what he will do until they are actually faced with the decision and that age has a definite impact on a person's safety consciousness and risk assessment.

9. AT WHAT ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL DO YOU FEEL THAT THE COMMANDER'S WORK LOAD BECOMES TOO GREAT TO EFFECTIVELY LEAD OR FLY HIGH THREAT MISSIONS?

Survey responses were almost evenly divided. Of the sixteen officers surveyed, five believed that the squadron commander level was the highest level where senior flyers could effectively fly combat missions. Four other respondents drew

the line below the wing commander level while the remaining seven respondents indicated that wing commanders and above faced too great a workload to fly combat missions effectively.

10. WHAT OTHER INSIGHTS COULD YOU SHARE ABOUT SENIOR OFFICERS FLYING IN COMBAT?

This section summarizes the responses to our final "catchall" question asking survey participants for insights not included in the other question areas. As in these other questions, most answers were sorted out by overall opinion, either positive or negative, to the basic question of senior leader combat flying. Comments are grouped under the specific headings of "No-senior flyers should not fly combat" and "Yes-senior flyers should fly combat".

Comments from the negative perspective included:

- I think it's not a good idea.
- Senior commanders should direct the campaign or battle. Don't fly unless attrition requires.
- Older flyers can't sustain the pace as well as younger ones can, and they are less willing to change their ways.
- Senior commanders should not fly beyond the FEBA unless there is a critical shortage of flyers.
- Senior commanders can be a detriment to the teamwork needed when assembling a strike package.

Comments favoring senior commanders flying in combat included:

-Even without combat experience of their own, senior commanders lead the first mission of a conflict, especially when their junior officers lack combat experience. This will instill confidence and experience in the junior officers.

-The experience of senior commanders could help assure the uncertainty of younger pilots on their first combat missions.

-A wing commander is a leader and must not be perceived as the head logistician.

Summary

In summary, we were surprised at the diversity in opinion and practice of senior commander combat flying in the international and sister service officers we surveyed. The overall opinion split over the appropriateness of combat flying could not be correlated with combat experience in the survey group. The size of the group, sixteen respondents, and the even split of eight for and eight against combat flying represented an unforeseen sizeable opinion against combat flying by senior commanders and provided valuable insight into the questions.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study set out to analyze the tensions wing commanders and their senior staff face when they must balance the conflicting demands of being both air leaders and effective commanders of large organizations. Our group perceived the demands of achieving and maintaining the proficiency needed to be an effective and productive leader in aerial combat would be so great that there would not be enough time available to also meet unit command/senior staff duty requirements. Therefore, a choice between these tasks would be required. We saw the options as either maintaining the required flight proficiency and delegating the unit level duties, or foregoing the combat air leader role and focusing on the critical large unit leadership and management tasks necessary to keep the unit, as a whole, functioning at peak effectiveness. Our research did not support such an either/or view. This section will cover the overall conclusions from our research and then review the conclusions in each area we examined.

The first general conclusion we reached was that few senior leaders and little research data identified a "problem" resulting from the conflicting demands. Although a few of our surveys and interviews identified different roles for senior

officers, especially from our international officers, the majority seemed comfortable meeting both types of demands. Therefore, although our group hypothesized there was a problem, our research did not uncover a large, identified problem.

The second conclusion follows from the first. If there was little identification of a problem, there is only "slight" tension from attempting to meet the demands of these conflicting tasks.

We believe the reasons for the lack of a perceived problem and tension center around the particular organizational culture and history of the United States Air Force, when compared to the experiences of other nations and our sister services. Our Air Force history is replete with examples of up front leadership by senior officers. This has led to successive generations of officers who, having been led into combat by senior officers, have done the same when they reached positions of senior leadership. We suspect this cultural bias where senior rated officers lead their units into battle, or are expected to, is too important a part of the way we fly and fight to ever change without well thought out rationale and guidance from the highest levels.

We do, however, also want to bring attention to what we perceive to be a changing perspective on how that senior staff member or commander best exercises the role of air leader. With recent technological advances in battlefield management; especially in the areas of airborne command and control, force

packaging, precision guided munitions, and other force multipliers; there may be a potential change to the way air leaders exercise their leadership in the future. Although the traditional leadership method has been as a flight lead or mission commander in a composite strike package, it may evolve into the mode of airborne mission controller, integrating all portions of a strike mission while still exercising leadership and accomplishing the mission.

Our major conclusion, therefore, is that senior wing leaders will continue to fly combat. This will not change in the future, although the specific method of combat participation may vary.

Turning our attention to conclusions from each analysis area, we find that at the micro level there are numerous points made on why senior leaders should not lead combat missions and what they must consider when deciding how to lead their units.

We concluded that current senior staffs in both the Strategic and Tactical Air Commands consider their primary role to be that of providing credible leadership to their organizations. This leadership is established and maintained by wing commanders and staffs personally flying combat missions. This is the most vital role of a wing commander and his senior staff members. The responses from our sister services and the international officers were similar in many respects to those of Strategic Air Command and Tactical Air Command with a change in emphasis, however, to properly

preparing their unit for combat rather than actually leading in combat. The international officers' responses indicated that this process of preparation for combat was the key role in their leadership mission.

Respondents felt that senior staff members participating in combat would not create any unnecessary potential risk to national security. These responses are probably the most accurate of all in that, barring very unusual circumstances, any combat ready crew member, wing commander or not, would represent approximately the same potential risk. The unusual circumstances would be a knowledge of potential or planned future missions that the wing staff would have that a line crew member would not. In addition, the type or level of conflict would not appreciably influence the decision of senior officers to fly in combat. Naturally, given the brand of individuals surveyed and their chosen profession this is the only answer that could be expected.

Another conclusion is that senior leaders' duties do not allow time for them to be fully and comfortably combat ready at the start of a conflict. The majority of our respondents stated they did not have sufficient time to hone their combat flying skills due to the tasks involved with their duties as commanders. This is more than an interesting observation, as these are the same individuals who vehemently stated that they would lead their men into combat. Whether or not this would cause a credibility gap should the senior leadership not fly in

combat, is potentially an issue of great significance.

Tactical Air Command and Strategic Air Command respondents overwhelmingly supported the belief that leaders not flying in combat would create a very real credibility gap. The sister services and international officers were solidly on the side that no credibility gap would be created.

At what level to cut off senior officers from combat flying is another important, but nebulous issue. The one seemingly consistent view, among most respondents, was that the line of demarcation was above the wing commander. On the other hand, some respondents felt that the level went as low as the squadron commander. The point being that at some time, dependent on many variables, the senior leadership should no longer actively or personally lead their aircrews into combat but should assume the role of directing them from an overall air campaign leader's role. Senior flying commanders should actively fly with their unit to fulfill the basic role of being visible and providing credible leadership. The question of senior leaders leading missions in combat seems to end up a balancing act between the potential benefits with the potential penalties combined with a great deal of subjective judgement and insight added by the wing commander.

Recommendations

Commanders above wing level must define the primary roles of their subordinate commanders and wing staffs. Is it to be

the preparation for combat or actual combat participation? If it is determined that combat preparation, and not combat flying is a senior officer's primary role, then they must be provided the necessary guidance. They must not feel any onus or "guilt" for not actually leading their forces into battle. If the role is determined to be actual combat participation, the following questions must be asked and truthfully answered:

1. Has the commander or senior wing staff member been afforded the opportunity and taken the time to train to a fully combat capable level?

2. Is the commander or senior wing staff member really capable or will his participation increase the potential risk to other participants or degrade mission effectiveness?

3. Has the requirement for the senior wing staff member to fly and lead combat missions been established to provide a credible and necessary "leadership by example" role or is it the eguism of peer pressure forcing this requirement?

If the senior staff cannot answer these questions in a manner that is beneficial to both the unit and the United States Air Force, then the problem has not been adequately thought out and we may need to take a new look at the entire idea. Given the limited resources available, both now and in the foreseeable future, the increasing complexity of both aircraft and weapons, and the density and lethality of the threat environment, is the price to be paid greater than the benefit that can be derived?

Summary

In summary, the results were both somewhat predictable and somewhat surprising. The predictable side, of course, was the requirement to provide the quality leadership necessary for a unit to train and equip itself to fight and win. This leadership role is paramount to all flying units engaged in combat. The surprising side came from the other view of how this leadership role can be provided without the necessity for the senior leader to actively participate in combat flying.

Depending upon personal biases and beliefs, there are good, sound arguments for and against an active combat role for senior leaders. Looking at it from what we believe is a neutral position, there appear to be, at least in this study, more unweighted arguments against the participation of senior leaders flying in combat than arguments for them to participate. However, this does not imply or state that the senior leaders should not fly in combat, "THEY WILL". What it does lead to is the requirement for an analytical, objective, and unbiased decision process that should help the wing commanders or senior leaders in making this very tough decision. There is more to this question than a simple "yes" or "no" answer that it appears to be on first look.

It is our hope, as previously stated, that this study will provide some insight into the possible solution to this problem of senior commanders and staff members flying in combat and give a different look at how others view this same question.

APPENDIX

METHODOLOGY AND SURVEY

The multifaceted problem of arriving at normative recommendations for the role to be played by senior commanders in combat required our group to isolate the various factors involved, analyze them in light of historical experience and Air Force tradition, and update the factors with research into contemporary attitudes held by present day senior Air Force leaders. Due to the potential insights of sister service and international officers available in the Air War College environment, research was also conducted as to their attitudes, opinions, and practices. When the research was completed, it was organized along United States Air Force Major Command lines and compiled into this Defense Analytical Study. Finally, we arrived at the conclusions and recommendations at the end of the analysis. With this as an overview, we will review our methodology in detail.

Sample Selection Criteria

For the purposes of this analysis, we defined a senior leader as a colonel, or equivalent rank officer, who was also a rated flyer, either pilot or navigator. We further qualified the sample selection criteria to officers assigned to duty

positions as Air Force wing commanders, vice wing commanders, deputy commander for operations, and assistant deputy commander for operations. For sister service and international officers, we used their equivalents of these positions. We also included U.S. Air Force air division and numbered air force commanders in our research.

We chose these criteria for several reasons. Officers in the ranks of lieutenant colonel and below populate the flying squadrons and wing staffs in positions where combat readiness is expected and required and were therefore presumed to fly and fight. Second, we limited our analysis to wing commanders, vice commanders, and operations staff due to their qualifications in assigned weapons systems. Other senior staff assigned to wing areas such as maintenance, combat support, or resources would not normally retain aircraft qualification and combat readiness as an integral part of their normal daily duties. Third, we chose to limit our analysis to this group because they are in the command and staff structure most likely to interface with the flying organizations charged with actual combat. And lastly, we needed to limit the scope of the project to a reasonable size.

For analysis purposes, we defined combat as wartime operations in conflict with a hostile power, either declared or undeclared. We chose to analyze combat at any point of the conflict spectrum, from low intensity conflict through strategic nuclear exchange, and combat of any duration, from

single mission strikes through protracted, long duration conflict. We also included peacetime operations where the mission of the unit required full-time combat readiness in preparation for conflict.

Once we decided on these bounds to our analysis, we then needed to define the various factors bearing on a senior officer's decisions about combat flying. We used the experiences of our study group as an initial starting point for our analysis areas. Once we synthesized a list of potential factors bearing on the problem from our individual efforts, we then compared and contrasted our findings, which led to a single, integrated list of factors. These factors would then form the basis of our historical and contemporary research.

Historical Research

Our historical research was composed of autobiographical, biographical, and topical research into combat attitudes and practices of well-known air leaders who were faced with aerial combat in World Wars I and II, Korea, and Vietnam. Our list of air leaders was derived from a bibliography compiled by the Air University Library under the title "Combat Leaders and Leadership" and then limited to air service leaders in positions analogous to our area of interest. In addition to biographical research on policies and practices, we also conducted additional research into leadership writings compiled in various other Air University bibliographies such as

"Leadership/Military Leadership" and "Organizational Dynamics." Other historical sources, such as unit histories, were consulted when specific actions were unclear or further information was required. Our research on historical data and Air Force tradition is presented in Chapter 2.

Study Survey

In order to bring this historical research into line with current attitudes and beliefs, we surveyed selected current and former Air Force wing commanders. The survey used is included as the next three pages of this appendix. Surveys were mailed to current wing commanders in both the Tactical Air Command and Strategic Air Command, the USAF combatant commands. We also conducted interviews of former wing commanders and their equivalents in sister and allied services who were students or faculty at the Air War College. Their perspectives, experiences, and attitudes were then analyzed and are presented in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

**COMMANDERS SURVEY
ON
COMMANDERS FLYING IN COMBAT**

In accordance with AFR 12-35, paragraph 30, the following information is provided as required by the Privacy Act of 1974:

- a. Authority:
 - (1) 5 USC 301, Departmental Regulations; and/or
 - (2) 10 USC 8012, Secretary of the Air Force. Powers, Duties, Delegation by Compensation.
- b. Principal Purpose: To sample opinions and attitudes concerning the flying of senior officers in combat.
- c. Routine Uses: To provide background information on senior officer combat flying for an Air War College Defense Analytical Study.
- d. Participation in this survey is voluntary and respondents will not be identified in the final analysis.

SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS

For present and previous USAF Wing Commanders, U.S. sister services, and AWC International Officers. This survey will take only ten to fifteen minutes to complete and your answers will help develop a picture of the senior air leader's role in combat flying. Please be candid in your comments and share your perspectives in as much detail as you wish. Please promptly return the completed survey in the enclosed envelope.

BACKGROUND

The role of senior flying commanders, in combat, varies between USAF Major Commands, sister services and other nations. This survey is part of an Air War College Defense Analytical Study in military leadership which will describe the advantages and disadvantages of senior commanders flying combat missions from a senior officer's perspective. As the conflict in Southeast Asia fades into the past, the current "generation" of senior commanders is the last to have flown combat or combat support missions in a sustained conflict.

COMMANDER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What do you perceive to be the most important role of a senior flying commander at the wing level? Why?

2. As a flying commander, do you think that the "Top Four" (CC, CV, DO, ADO) in the Wing should fly combat missions?

Yes _____ No _____ Why?

3. Are the positive affects of these individuals flying in combat outweighed by the potential risk to national security if they should be captured? Why?

4. If you were not available for duty, would there be a leadership gap in the Wing? Things to consider are battle staff and command leadership, administration, and operational decision making? Why?

5. Can these senior leaders afford the time required to achieve and maintain a fully combat ready status? (This includes all of the requirements for flying and non-flying training areas?)

6. Is there a credibility gap created by senior leaders not flying in combat? Why?

7. Do your current duties allow you an adequate level of flying proficiency to be truly combat ready at the start of a conflict? How about leading a flight or composite force via flying as a wingman?
8. How would exposure to risk of loss or type/level of conflict influence your decision to fly in combat?
9. At what organizational level do you feel that the commander's workload becomes too great to effectively lead or fly a high threat combat mission?
10. What other insights could you share about senior officers flying in combat?

Please provide the following demographic data for our survey:

TYPE A/C FLYING: _____
COMBAT EXPERIENCE: Y____ N____ TYPE A/C: _____
TOTAL PRIMARY MISSION SORTIES FLOWN LAST:
30____60____90____DAYS
MAJCOM: _____

Would you like the survey team to contact you for further information? YES____ NO____ If yes, your Autovon _____

If you would like a copy of the completed study please provide your office mailing address.

Thank you for your assistance.

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